

Have Some Faith

He got into the Uber. He did not question this step. He did not suspect the driver drunk nor the vehicle to crash before it arrived at his destination. He believed he would arrive safely and on time. And he did. Just like he always did.

She had stopped showing up for church on Sunday's. She knew you didn't need church to pray but she had stopped anyway. Now when she caught sight of her smile in the mirror, she thought of decay. Of crooked teeth. Of misaligned jaws. Of stars that misalign and mess with the fates and show up in the morning horoscope with a warning but she no longer believes in those things. To her, teeth were like kids in elementary school who can't keep in a straight line and whisper and laugh and are shushed by the teacher. She used to be one of those children. She hasn't been in many minutes. Children are lighter. Now she was heavy like an adult.

He puts on his headset and enters the conference call. He can hear her footsteps pattering around the house, hears the kettle going off and the washing machine making that drumming sound that's irked him since moving in. He hears the door open. Close. He didn't anticipate collapse. He planned for the future like it was coming. He didn't ever think himself out of time.

She is paranoid. Someone's been following her in her dreams, at work, on her walks home, trying to tell her something. She listens to what passerbys say on the street and puts them together like clues. Like they are messages directed at her. She thinks song lyrics are speaking to her. She struggles to be here in the same moment as everyone else. Her mind was always trying to take her somewhere else.

He walks to his office and wonders what they will have for dinner. Maybe they will try that new Mediterranean place. He remembers his upcoming ski trip and gets excited. He passes by the old lady's flower stand. "Affordable" he thinks but accidentally says out loud while

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looking at a \$5 rose bouquet. He pulls out a rumpled five dollar bill and hands it over. He sees this as a good investment. To see her smile later will be worth much more.

She scrubs the bathtub. She finds it satisfying to see the yellow grime circle the drain. The smell of chemicals is strong. She props open the old factory converted windows to expel the scent. Then, she mops the floor and lights a smoke as a reward. When all is done, she sprays the room with a blend of eucalyptus and lavender. She read that these aromas are meant to be calming and she is trying to “clear her mind” but she can still hear the echo of her mother telling her she’ll never amount to anything more, “You will work in this pizza shop your whole life!” There once was a voice in her head which would tell her which way to go. Some would call this intuition. Now it just sounded like interference.

He once told her he doesn’t need a god to tell him if he is a good person or not, doesn’t pray or ask for what he wants. Just goes for it.

She hits up a coffee shop each morning to people to watch. She sits at the window and watches as all of the people rush by, all complete with their own style and flavor. If the sidewalk were a tongue, and the city a mouth, then the grind of the day was masticating them away and she was merely a taste bud taking it all in.

He doesn’t understand why she likes going to coffee shops so much. They are not conducive to getting work done.

She keeps going to the doctor and they keep telling her she is fine. She feels that something is physically wrong but they keep telling her it is all in her head.

He went to a doctor, too. His first year at university he was diagnosed with PTSD. He was prescribed some pills for it but immediately flushed them down the toilet without ever

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taking one. He's fine now. Sometimes he gets flashbacks and panic attacks, but she holds him until he is fine again.

After the appointment, she walks by a church and walks in. She lights a candle and says a prayer. She has no bills to spare for the donation box. She thinks it might be bad karma to steal a prayer, but she gets on her knees anyway and pleads. For what? Forgiveness? Protection? The air feels thin like it does at the top of a mountain. She feels faint and unstable, like the lightest of touches could send her over the edge. She feels like someone who is constantly checking their inbox for messages and receives nothing.

He walks home and picks up take out from that new Mediterranean place. He does not suspect the food could be contaminated or tampered with in any way.

She goes to the pharmacy to pick up her prescription. After much delay, the man behind the counter tells her there was an issue with her insurance and she will have to come back the next day. She is standing in the tampon aisle when she gets the feeling that her head is being pulled up. Her gaze fixes on the ceiling. She has never once noticed this ceiling before. So beautiful. The kind of ceiling that makes one feel closer to god. She is already kneeling and a prayer starts pouring out of her.

Tonight he will wait for her. Her post-it notes will be all around the house, but she will have wiped all of the fingerprints. She will have picked up every last hair clip, toe nail and stray hair. It will seem like someone went missing or got murdered. He knows not to be alarmed by this. He knows she likes to disappear but never doubts her return.

She walks into the apartment. She wants to break down, collapse into his arms and tell him all of her secrets. Tell him about the moment in the pharmacy, but the flowers and take out

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containers on the counter catch her eye and everything else falls to the wayside. Everything else melts and he stands there, solid. She sees this as a sign. Of what? She does not care.

On Sunday morning, they will look at properties in Northern Liberties and Olde Kensington. The Greek and Russian women will speculate about her absence over after-service coffee. Next Sunday, when the whispering women have stopped expecting to see her, she will show up again.